

Comprehension Newsletter • April 2026

“Strong readers aren’t born—they are built one text, one idea, and one connection at a time.”-Unknown

First Thursday Highlights

We had a great First Thursday KAT Chat this April! Our focus was on **paired selections, using a comparison matrix** to help organize students’ thinking to help prepare for testing and next year’s planning. We also shared **encouraging words from leaders to support teachers** during this important time, along with several key updates. We invite you to use **the links to the right to watch the segments** and explore our **celebrations, Q&A, and library updates**.

Don’t Miss Out: Middle School Implementation Opportunity

EMPOWER can help close achievement gaps. The program includes a supplemental web-based, adaptive tutoring intervention focused on reading comprehension for Grades 6-8. Study participants will also receive professional development. EMPOWER is intended to develop literacy skills to understand all types of texts. The framework teaches children to select important ideas, generate a main idea, extend that idea into a summary, and draw inferences when reading narrative, poetry, biographical, and expository texts. Vocabulary instruction is also provided. The software uses modeling, practice tasks, assessment, and scaffolding feedback and includes support for Spanish speakers.

- During classroom use (15 minutes daily), teachers instruct students using resources from the teacher library (over 9000 classroom materials, including lesson guides, customized resources for popular textbooks, novels, and graphic organizers).
- EMPOWER podcasts and videos can be used as a supplement to the English language arts class session.

We are seeking school district participants to pilot the program during the 2026-27 school year at no cost to the district and receive all the benefits of the study.

Benefits to Partnering

- Free teacher professional development
 - Two days of practice-based professional development including practice and connections to the schools’ curricula materials
 - Coaching support for classroom implementation
- Teachers will receive \$1,000 for study activities

We are seeking a commitment for district participation in the 2026-27 school year. We are asking districts to commit to:

- Two or more schools in the district to implement the program and two or more schools to serve as control schools for the 2026-27 school year
 - Control group schools will receive the intervention in the 2027-28 school year
- Implement the intervention through 15 minutes of daily instruction and EMPOWER podcasts and videos to supplement instruction
- Participation in EMPOWER professional development and coaching
- Participate in study data collection, including pre/post-tests and classroom observations

First Thursday Links

- [KAT Chat Full Video](#)
- [KAT Chat Slides](#)
- [Paired Selection Model Video](#)
- **Task Cards:**
 - [Main Idea](#)
 - [Paired Selections: Inventions](#)
 - [Paired Selections: Sports](#)
- [The Final Push: Empowering Words](#)
- [KAT Celebrations](#)
- [Q&A Session](#)
- [Library Updates & Calendar](#)
 - [Monthly Calendar](#)

Contact Information

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Materials developed and presented for the EMPOWER, ITSS, SWELL, FASCT, SEED-MOOV, KATE, and PRISM projects are copyright protected and may not be shared or combined with other instructional approaches without consulting the research team. The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grants S411A250007, R305A180060, R305A150057, U423A180074, S411A210002, and R305A220015 to Texas A&M University. Please address all communications regarding these lessons to Dr. Kay Wijekumar at k_wijekumar@tamu.edu

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Summer Professional Development Opportunities

Literacy.IO at the Center for Urban School Partnerships at Texas A&M brings you an outstanding opportunity to achieve excellent success with reading comprehension!

Dates: June 16-17, 2026

The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center
1601 Lake Robbins Dr., The Woodlands, TX 77380

Times: 8 am to 4:00 pm daily

Lunch and snacks provided

Cost \$500 per registration (*discounted registration available for schools who register the principal, coach, and up to 8 teachers – 10 total for \$3000*)

Registration & Cancellation Deadline: **May 15, 2026**

Individual Registration:



Discounted Group Registration:



Literacy.IO in collaboration with MSU College of Education, The Reading League – Michigan, and MAISA brings you an outstanding opportunity to achieve excellent success with reading comprehension!

Dates: June 22-23, 2026

Location: Michigan State University – Erickson Hall, 620 Farm Lane, East Lansing

Times: 8 am to 3:30 pm daily

Lunch and snacks provided

Cost \$500 per registration (*discounted registration available for schools who register the principal, coach, and up to 8 teachers – 10 total for \$3000*)

Registration & Cancellation Deadline: **May 15, 2026**

Individual Registration:



Discounted Group Registration:



At both KAT Institute events, we invite your teachers, coaches, principals, & curriculum directors to attend the two-day practice-based professional development (PBPD) to learn the knowledge acquisition and transformation (KAT) framework. Our research shows strong and positive results. Our team is comprised of practitioners who achieve 100% pass rates with their students. You can earn CEUs.

During the PBPDs you will:

1. Learn about the evidence-based practices and core reading comprehension constructs
2. Leverage your local textbook and readings to support comprehension
3. Practice planning and delivering KAT lessons in narrative, expository, poetry, and biography genres of text
4. Address misleading tests
5. Promote motivation and confidence in reading for all your students
6. Achieve very high pass rates on state level tests

For further information, contact us at www.literacy.io/contact/

Mark your calendar for the next First Thursday:
May 7, 2026

We'll see you there!



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Supporting Reading Success Beyond the School Year

ACE Literacy Project

To share the ACE flyers with your families, click on the links below.

- [ACE Podcast Flyer - English](#)
- [ACE Podcast Flyer - Spanish](#)

Available on YouTube, iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts!